

composing process and that, for students and professional writers of the future, writing and composing will become a much less linear process than hitherto," they betray a notion of how one writes well that is surely misleading. Few professional writers would call the critical element in that process linear, no matter how fluently in any actual drafting their words may flow in lines across the page. The crux of writing lies in the poised attentiveness of a fully functioning mind, flickering constantly back and forth over all the intricacies of itself and its subject in a determination to grasp it all both whole and in detail. No matter how skilful our future students may become at the keyboard, even the tiniest distractions of coding and decoding involved will hardly permit that utter concentration on one's subject, vital to achieving subtleties in language, that is fundamental to sensitive composing.

Such very occasional lapses notwithstanding, this book in its own way conveys the same rare sense of wholesome excitement about the basic healthiness of computers that Papert's *Mindstorms* did; and we owe such authors honour who, by publishing, are keeping open for the rest of us options of great promise. That is no small service to the human race.

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WRITING AND THE WRITER.

Toronto and New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982.
257 pp. \$20.25.

Writing and the Writer presents the view that the ability to write fluently is as important and as accessible to most of us as is the ability to read. Writing, the author insists, is far too important to be left entirely to the professionals; it is an essential means whereby we can discover what we know, by which we organize our knowledge, give shape to it, and acquire new insights. Writing is not thought, anymore than language is thought, but unlike other forms of language, writing enables us to observe the products of our thought, to interact with them, to "put thinking to work and increase its possibilities."(p.35) The results of this process of self-discovery can lead us to change our view of the world; for the author, writing is potentially a revolutionary activity.

The reader will not be surprised, then, to discover that Smith places much less emphasis on the effect of audience in determining the shape of what one writes than do many other authorities in this field. The communicative function of writing

is perhaps less important to the writer than is its use in the writer's search for himself. Or as C. Day Lewis suggested, "We do not write in order to be understood; we write in order to understand." This book is testimony to the author's own belief in this view. It is much more an inquiry into the subject than an exposition of it. The author himself acknowledges the extent to which his own thinking changed during the composing process. In a fascinating "Retrospect" at the end of the book, he gives an account of how his own interaction with the evolving text led to changed perceptions, new insights, and a good deal of rewriting.

The author uses his introductory chapters to good advantage. The reader is provided with useful overview of the book and its major themes in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 sets forth his philosophical position regarding the cultural importance and personal usefulness of writing; and in Chapter 3 he looks at the two sides of writing, composition and transcription. In the next four chapters, he develops the psycholinguistic framework for his conception of the writing process. His treatment is studiously non-technical, however, providing us thereby with a writer's-eye view of the complex and obscure inner world of the mind, of thought and meaning, of the grammars one uses to describe the ways in which meanings becomes language. This section concludes with a chapter entitled "The Writer-Reader Contract" in which he analyzes the interactions of writer, reader and text, and the vital importance of conventions to both writer and reader.

The process of composition itself is examined in the following three chapters. Included is an interesting description of how a writer develops "specifications" for his text, how these interact with the text itself, and how conventions facilitate the writer's task. We are also given an account of the writer's odyssey from prewriting through writing (around, over, and through the inevitable blocks) to rewriting, and finally to transcription.

The concluding chapters, which deal with learning, writing, and learning to write, will be of particular interest to teachers and teacher-educators, but only if one is prepared not to seek facile solutions to complex pedagogical questions. Smith belongs to the naturalistic school of pedagogy, which asserts that the processes of teaching and learning anything should conform as closely as possibly to the way it occurs "naturally". One learns to write best by utilizing those strategies and processes which produce fluent writing, which professional writers commonly use, (and which, in turn, are determined by the way thought and language interact and conspire to produce writing).

One teaches writing best by accepting the fact that it cannot be taught; it must be learned. A teacher of writing must know a great deal about writing and learning, and learning to write, but he must also have enough good sense not to

interfere too much with his student writers at work. He must, however, be on a constant look-out for the teachable moment, and he must be accessible to the student writer at those crucial times when a writer needs the comfort and advice of a confidant, or the feedback of a critic, or the eye of a demanding editor.

This book has much to commend it; not the least of its merits is the accessibility of its message to those of us who are far from expert in the fields of cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics. By developing in this fashion relevant background to some critical issues in curriculum development and methodology, and above all by offering a coherent personal view of the subject, Smith has rendered a valuable service. At a time when we are in danger of being swamped by a rising tide of composition textbooks, programs, courses, centres, and workshops, coherence of any kind is a virtue, even if one is unable to accept all of an author's propositions.

His most significant contribution, however, may have been to remind us how vitally important is the task of helping others (and ourselves) learn how to write. Being able to write fluently may be more important to our cultural survival and individual sanity than mastery of computer technology. As John Ciardi once said to an audience of businessmen, "An ulcer, gentlemen, is an unwritten poem."

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Marcel Chotkowski La Follette, ed.
CREATIONISM, SCIENCE, AND THE LAW.
Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1983.
236 pp. \$(U.S.)9.95.

This book contains records of and commentaries on yet another episode in the attempts by American Fundamentalists to have their point of view on the origins of things represented in public school courses.

In March 1981 the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 590, requiring "balanced treatment" of "Creation Science" and "Evolution Science" in all public schools in the state. The law was soon challenged on constitutional grounds, as the plaintiffs, a group comprising mostly dignitaries and organizations representing several religious denominations, contended that it